



# Office of Communications

# Public Health News

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## Health Advisory: Consumers Advised Not to Eat Fresh Spinach

LOS ANGELES - The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health continues to warn consumers not to eat any fresh spinach product (e.g., packaged spinach, mixed greens or spring mix containing spinach, bulk or bundled) until further notice because it may be a possible cause of a multi-state outbreak of E. coli.

Public Health's Environmental Health Division conducted surveys of 50 non-chain food markets to assess if spinach was still for sale. Sixteen markets were selling raw fresh spinach, while three were selling prepackaged spinach or mixed greens including spinach. These products were all voluntarily removed from sale by the markets but these results suggest that spinach products may still be for sale in some markets. The Environmental Health Division is conducting additional inspections at other markets. If you see a market that is selling fresh spinach, please report this to Environmental Health at (888) 700-9995.

"Given the risk of consuming spinach possibly contaminated with E. coli bacteria at this time, the public is urged to avoid consuming all fresh spinach, whether bagged or not", said Jonathan Fielding, M.D., M.P.H., Director of the Department of Public Health (DPH).

Public Health officials in multiple states, with the assistance of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), are investigating a large outbreak of E. coli 0157:H7 infections. Thus far since August 25<sup>th</sup>, 131 cases with the particular outbreak strain of E. coli 0157:H7 have been reported from twenty-one states, and one patient has died. To date, no suspected or confirmed cases have been found in Los Angeles County. Public Health officials are continuing to monitor the situation closely.

The E. coli 0157:H7 causes diarrhea that is often bloody and accompanied by abdominal cramps. There is usually little or no fever. Most persons develop illness 3-4 days after eating the bacteria and illness typically resolves within a week. However, some individuals, including young children, elderly, and the immuno-compromised are at higher risk of developing the hemolytic uremic syndrome, or HUS which can cause kidney damage and is life threatening.

Any persons who have eaten fresh spinach, who are ill with the above symptoms, should contact their health care provider for medical evaluation. Diagnosed or suspected E. coli 0157:H7 cases should be reported rapidly by physicians to telephone: (888) 397-3993.

For the public with questions regarding E. coli, please call the Los Angeles County Health Information Hotline at (800) 427-8700 or 211.

Public Health is committed to protecting and improving the health of the nearly 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control, and community and family health. Public Health comprises more than 3,800 employees and has an annual budget exceeding \$650 million.

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